

Aboriginal Resistance, 1790-1997

This list has been compiled from quotes in just three published sources, listed at the bottom of this page. There were, and are, many more instances of resistance, but when this many are seen in such a long list they help to explode the myth that Europeans walked in here and took over without any real resistance. There is strong evidence that there was a long and protracted guerrilla war here in Australia using many tactics including destruction of food sources, disruption of lines of supply and communication, spying, negotiating, killing the enemy, stealing of food, not just to deprive their enemy of it, but to provide for their people in times when energy was used for meetings and fighting instead of hunting and gathering, stealing and learning to use our weapons, humiliating and demoralising the enemy, not cooperating with Europeans, and being generally disruptive.

We have made up this list as our contribution to the Reconciliation process, as we feel it is important to tell the truth, to explode myths that attempt to trivialise Aboriginal people. Feel free to use this list and build on it.

Timeline of Aboriginal resistance, 1790-1997

1790 - 1802

NSW. Pemulwuy leads Aboriginal resistance to invasion. Pemulwuy was the first Guerrilla fighter. He was considered unable to be killed by bullets as he was shot seriously twice and survived both times.

1804

- Georges River. Sydney Gazette reported that blacks had made a social call on a farmer's wife and kept her talking while others cleared a whole acre of corn and carried it off in canoes.
- Hawkesbury River. Three local blacks negotiated with Governor King to retain some places on the lower part of the river, and they would not trouble the white man. They said they objected to ever increasing settlement along the river. King agreed.

1805

Flour rapidly won approval of, and became favoured targets of raids on stations. 40 bushels of wheat stolen and secreted away on the fringes of white settlement.

1816

NSW. 200 sheep destroyed on Malgoa estate.

1817

Tasmania. Musquito volunteered to track down bush rangers in return for his freedom as promised by the Governor of Tasmania. Even though Michael Howe (Bushranger) was caught Musquito did not get his freedom. After this he became the leader of a group which later linked with another group from Oyster Bay.

1820's

- Tasmania. The clans had mastered guns. Robinson discovered the Aborigines had hidden caches of guns they could use proficiently and accurately.
- Tasmania. Reports of blacks using guns to attack Europeans.
- Tasmania. Fire was used systematically and with great effect, to the point where the whites feared the extinction of the whole colony.

1822 - 1824

Murray River. Windradyne leads Wiradjuri Resistance

1827 - 1830

Tasmania. The accumulation of private injury and personal tragedy fused to produce the bitter racial hatred and desperate resistance of the Black War.

1830's & 1840's

The occupation of the northern pastoral frontier of NSW and Qld caused a burgeoning of racial violence as pastoralists moved deeper into Aboriginal territory.

1830

Tasmania. Aborigines beat 100 ewes to death.

1831 - 1833

Yagan leads Nyungar Resistance

1830's

- Bathurst. A ceremony was held by Aborigines to ask help of the Great Spirit against the havoc caused by 'civilisation'.
- Port Essington. Reports of Aboriginal parties expressing their confidence of their superiority in the bush by turning their backs on pursuing Europeans and slapping their buttocks in derision.

1830

- Lake Alexandrina. Explorer Sturt's party noticed smoke signals preceding them when they were crossing Lake Alexandrina.
- Tasmania. Settlers found a hundredweight of flour baked into dampers and stored by Aborigines.

1832

Tasmania. Robinson was shown a hollow tree armoury containing muskets.

1835

N.S.W. Explorer Mitchell found his movements monitored and reported by smoke signals at the Darling River.

1839

The Gwydir. A squatter observed that he believed that the whole British army would be unable to apprehend one tribe in his district.

1840's

- Victoria. A group of blacks confronted 16 armed and mounted whites using shields of bark.
- Wide Bay. A settler reported he had followed a group of Aborigines who had successfully taken 500 sheep over two mountains, through a mile and a half of rain forest and on to another mountain.
- Grampians. A native police detachment pursued a group of Aborigines for eight days through gullies, over ridges and across mountain streams where the blacks had made bridges strong enough for the troop horses to pass over.
- Western District. Squatters followed a group of blacks into almost inaccessible mountains and discovered a very ingeniously constructed brush yard where stolen sheep had been kept during the night.
- Darling Downs. Reports of Aboriginal parties expressing their confidence of their superiority in the bush by turning their backs on pursuing Europeans and slapping their buttocks in derision
- Victoria. Reports of blacks using guns to attack Europeans.
- Northern NSW. Pioneer settler E.O. Ogilvie came across a group of blacks living in hostile seclusion in the mountains. The blacks told him to return to his station, "You have the river and the open country and you ought to be content and leave the mountains to the black people". Ogilvie told them he wanted to live in peace and wanted nothing in their territory except the grass. An agreement was reached.

1840.

- Melbourne. Several hundred Aborigines assembled at a station and threatened to burn down the huts saying that they "did not care for white men as they had more muskets than them", showing at the same time nearly thirty guns.
- Port Phillip. Aborigines, angered at an unprovoked capture, temporary imprisonment, and killing of 2 of their men, channel their anger into magic in order to unleash the horrifying power of Mindye, the rainbow serpent on the whites and blacks who were friendly with them. This was very disruptive as most of the local blacks left or became uncooperative.
- Gippsland. Blacks attacked a station and took everything that was movable.
- Ovens River. Dr. Mackay's station attacked and destroyed. Animals killed or driven off, buildings and other property burned.
- Victoria. David Waugh's station destroyed. Shepherds killed, sheep run off, everything taken.

1842

- Port Fairy. Settlers petitioned the Superintendent computing their collective losses over a few months at 3600 sheep, 100 cattle and 10 horses.
- McIntyre. Aborigines killed a horse.
- New England plateau. 1200 ewes and lambs killed and burnt.

1843

- Portland district. A flock of 480 sheep was stolen by Aborigines, and the squatter and his men had to pursue them across country for 250 miles.
- Mooney River. Shepherds told by blacks that they intended to kill or drive all the whites off the Mooney, McIntyre and Barwon Rivers'
- Road from Ipswich to Darling Downs. The road was barricaded with logs, and the stalled drays attacked by blacks from surrounding vegetation. Two separate sources suggest the objective was to prevent all supplies reaching the properties, thereby starving them out.

1843 -1846

McIntyre River district. One writer suggests 100 horses killed in this district. A northern squatter wrote to the Maitland Mercury in 1843 saying that the blacks had told him they would destroy all his horses, thus stopping the men from attending to the cattle.

1844 - 1845

John Mann, member of Leichhardt's party, observed that they were under surveillance by the Aborigines and that the camps were overturned as soon as they were vacated.

1845

- Portland. The Portland Gazette reported that the local blacks were adopting iron spears and were systematically attacking cattle herds with them.
- Mitchell River. Explorer John Gilbert was killed by spear.

1846

- Liverpool Plains. 400 ewes killed on Cobb's Station.
- Moreton Bay. Several acres of Maize taken in one night.
- Spencer Gulf. When a party of police surprised an Aboriginal camp at the head of Spencer Gulf the police were unable to follow them because of the rocky surface.

1848

- Brisbane River. 40 cattle drowned.
- Qld. Explorer Edmund Kennedy was killed by spear.

1849

Adelaide. Aborigines warned that 'clever men' were about to create havoc in the town.

1851

- Maranoa. Local magistrates met and petitioned the local native police officer detailing the losses sustained by the squatters which amounted to 6000 cattle and 2000 sheep in eighteen months.
- Wide River. A squatter reported he'd been warned that when the Bunya was ripe the blacks intended to take all the sheep and kill all the white men.

1852

Maryborough. The Commissioner for Crown Lands explained that local clans had taken his sweet potatoes despite a watchdog and a paling fence 6 & 1/2 feet high.

1856

Fitzroy River. Local blacks assembled in large numbers when Charles Archer tried to cross, and said they intended to attack and destroy any whites who tried to go in that direction.

1857

Hornet Bank. All whites, but one, were killed in revenge of the beating and raping of two young Aboriginal girls.

1858

Camboon Station. 4 shepherds were besieged, and told by the blacks that they would take the lives of all the white men in the country.

1860's

Maranoa. Reports of Aboriginal parties expressing their confidence of their superiority in the bush by turning their backs on pursuing Europeans and slapping their buttocks in derision.

1861

- Coopers Creek. William Howitt, explorer, told a story of meeting an Aborigine, a Dieri called Jelinapiramurana who asked him if he would tell the white men who were coming up to his country, according to the information sent him by tribes further down, that they should sit down on the one side of Lake Hope and the local clans would sit down on the other so that they would not be likely to quarrel.
- Cullinlaringoe. Nineteen Europeans killed in a revenge attack for an unprovoked attack by Native Police.

1867

- Qld. Police found, in a camp near Marysborough, three hundredweight of sweet potatoes & two foot pile of damper stored by Aborigines.
- Qld. John Yeates property raided several times in 3 months. He ended up abandoning the farm.

1870's

- Road from Cooktown to Palmer. A recent study has determined that 133 horses were killed on this road in 6 years during the 1870's.
- Don River. Raids on corn crops.

1873 - 1874.

Fort Mueller. Large well organised attacks reported by explorer Giles on his 4th expedition.

1873

Bowen. Farmers complained that blacks had stolen crops growing within 10 yards of their huts.

1874

North Qld. A large gathering of blacks made two effigies of white men, and then attacked the effigies with their tomahawks, cutting them to pieces.

1880's

'Northern rainforest'. Christie Palmerston was challenged by a small hostile party.

1880's - 1890's

Cape York. Reports of blacks using guns to attack Europeans.

1880

Governor Hunter wrote that the Aborigines were aware of the power to reduce to extreme distress the Europeans with the use of fire, and that they had threatened to do so.

1882

Yarrabah Peninsula. A European group who landed on the peninsula was monitored reported on by smoke signals.

1883

- Edward Curr translated Aboriginal song about stealing horses.
- Brisbane. The Brisbane Courier estimates that in the previous 10 years over 200 horses had been speared.

1884

- Police found stockyard in bush with two horses which were being regularly fed and ridden by local Aborigines.
- Battle Mountain. Kalkadoons fight Europeans on Battle Mountain.

1886.

Victoria. Barak leads struggle for right to 'permanent' residence on Corranderrk reserve in Victoria.

1888

Barron Valley. Farms raided heavily when corn was ripe.

1888 - 1890

Kimberleys. Jandamurra leads resistance in The Kimberleys.

1890's

Central Australia. Reports of Aboriginal parties expressing their confidence of their superiority in the bush by turning their backs on pursuing Europeans and slapping their buttocks in derision.

1890

Northern Territory. Welleroo Station burnt and looted. Almost everything movable taken.

1891

Temple Downs station. Reports of Aboriginal parties expressing their confidence of their superiority in the bush by turning their backs on pursuing Europeans and slapping their buttocks in derision.

1938

Sesqui Centenary Day of Mourning.

1949

Pindan Movement established.

1963

Yirrkala petition Parliament about excision of their lands by Nabalco.

1965

Freedom Ride Bus Tour through N.S.W. as a protest against racism.

1966

Gurindji walk off Wave Hill station.

1968

Yirrkala take out Supreme Court writs against Nabalco and Australian Government.

1970

Out station movement commences, Aboriginal Histories and Literature emerge, VAAL Campaign succeeds in gaining freehold title for residents of Lake Tyers and Framlingham Reserves.

1971

Aboriginal Legal Service is established at Redfern.

1972

Kooris establish Tent Embassy at Parliament House Canberra.

1974

Parkjur Ltd. Established. Now known as The Western Districts Foundation Aboriginal Corporation, St Mary's.

1975

Commonwealth Parliament passes the Racial Discrimination Act.

1976

Commonwealth Parliament passes the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act.

1977

Wiradjuri prosecute Australian and British Governments for unlawful dispossession.

1978

The Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Ordinance, instituting prosecution for trespass and desecration of Aboriginal sites is passed. The Kimberly Land Council is formed. The Northern Territory is given self-government by the Fraser Government.

1980

Link-Up is established to reunite Aborigines with the families that they were taken from.

1982

Eddie Mabo commences proceedings in the High Court of Australia.

1985

Uluru (Ayres Rock) and Katatjura (Mt. Olgas) are repossessed by their traditional owners.

1987

The Black Rights Committee wins fight for Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody.

26/01/1988

Aborigines March for Justice, Freedom and Hope in Sydney. The 26th January becomes known as Survival Day.

1991

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody presents its report and Recommendations to the Federal Government.

1991

High Court hears argument in MABO (no 2); Queensland Parliament passes the Aboriginal Land Act and the Torres Strait Islander Land Act.

1993

United Nations Year of Indigenous People is celebrated. Second World Indigenous Youth Conference is held in Darwin. Federal Government passes Native Title Act.

16/03/1995.

The high Court unanimously upholds the validity of the Native Title Act and strikes down the Western Australian legislation.

1997

The Wik people win their land rights case.

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